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1. Policy Overview

- 1.1. St Mungo's believes domestic abuse is unacceptable whenever and however it occurs.
- 1.2. St Mungo's has a 'survivor-centred' approach to domestic abuse. Survivor's views and experiences will inform prioritisation and delivery of services, in line with our commitment to client involvement.
 - We will listen to survivors with a non-judgemental and believing approach.
 - We aim to empower survivors by advising them of their options and giving guidance so they can make their own decisions.
 - Survivors' choices will be prioritised, subject to an assessment of safety. If the survivor requests it, the presumption is that any client who perpetrates domestic abuse to other clients in the same service will be transferred out of the service. In some cases, the survivor may also wish to move.
 - We will only involve other agencies or share information without the consent of the client if required to do so by law or if information sharing is necessary for the protection of survivors.
- 1.3. St Mungo's will develop effective partnerships with survivors and other relevant agencies. Staff will consult specialist domestic abuse agencies when safety planning and participate in the MARAC process and local and regional domestic abuse forums.
- 1.4. St Mungo's will continually review the safety of its services, and explore new ways to improve safety for survivors of domestic abuse, including services which are not staffed 24 hours, or are not accommodation based.
- 1.5. St Mungo's staff will be mindful that many clients will have experienced abuse in their childhood or past. Staff will listen, believe and support the client to decide what support they would like to access.
- 1.6. Some clients may be perpetrators of domestic abuse. St Mungo's believes all domestic abuse is unacceptable. Staff will actively seek support from specialist agencies to help them manage and accommodate clients who are perpetrators, making robust assessments of the risk that clients pose to other clients and to others in the community.
- 1.7. In order to reduce the incidence and impact of abuse, St Mungo's will challenge the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse and take steps to support survivors to regain choice and control.
- 1.8. Many St Mungo's clients are parents, who may or may not have contact with their children. These children may have been exposed to domestic abuse and St Mungo's will work to prevent further exposure by identification and management of safety concerns.
- 1.9. All staff will proactively identify and take action against domestic abuse in St Mungo's services and refer to Safeguarding Adults (B37) and/or Safeguarding Children (B46).

- 1.10. St Mungo's will provide training on how to work effectively with survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy and procedure covers the St Mungo's approach to all clients who may be survivors or perpetrators of domestic abuse, as well as their families and other visitors to our services.
- 2.2. This procedure must be applied in conjunction with Safeguarding Adults (B37) where the primary victim/survivor is aged over 18.
- 2.3. Where the survivor of domestic abuse is aged 16-18 apply this procedure in conjunction with Safeguarding Children (B46).
- 2.4. Where a child has seen, heard, or experienced the effects of domestic abuse or are related to the person being abused or the perpetrator, they are recognised as a victim. Apply this procedure in conjunction with Safeguarding Children (B46).
- 2.5. St Mungo's response to abuse occurring between adults who are not former or current intimate partners or family members (see section 4.4), or who may or may not live together is should be in line with KO21 Prevention and Reduction of Violence and Safeguarding Adults (B37).

3. Diversity Implications

- 3.1. St Mungo's recognises that domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability and religious beliefs, but also that research shows most abuse is perpetrated by men against women. Women are more likely than men to suffer repeat incidents of domestic abuse, and serious physical or mental injury or death as a result of such abuse. Women in poverty are particularly likely to have experienced violence and abuse.
- 3.2. When St Mungo's considers women as a cohort, the term 'women' is inclusive of all trans women.
- 3.3. Children are affected directly and indirectly and there is a strong correlation between domestic abuse and child abuse and child homicide. Children who see or hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse, who are related to the person being abused or the perpetrator, are regarded as a victim of domestic abuse. Children are no longer viewed as bystanders of domestic abuse but victims in their own right.
- 3.4. Groups such as black minority ethnic, lesbian, gay, bisexual, non binary, transgender and male domestic abuse survivors and those with vulnerable immigration status may face further barriers to disclosure and reporting, for example increased stigma or isolation, language skills, lack of familiarity with the legal system, an inability to obtain religious divorce, previous experience of discrimination in disclosing their experiences and accessing services.
- 3.5. Perpetrators of abuse may exploit these characteristics to further abuse victims, for example threatening to 'out' someone for their gender identity or sexual orientation, threatening to 'deport' a victim with vulnerable immigration status.
- 3.6. Disabled people face particularly high risk of domestic abuse. In some cases, the primary perpetrator of domestic abuse may be a carer.
- 3.7. Research shows that survivors of domestic abuse living in rural areas remain with the perpetrator for longer than those living in urban areas. Perpetrators in rural areas can exploit the relative lack of services, transport and housing options to isolate and control survivors, who may also face stigma from close knit rural communities.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Domestic abuse (cross government definition):** Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners, family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can include but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Abuse relating to gender identify or sexuality
- Economic
- Emotional
- Forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Honour based
- Physical
- Psychological
- Sexual

Abuse can be perpetrated by partners, ex partners, family members (living together or not) including children under the age of 18, adult children or siblings.

- 4.2. **Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG):** Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

- 4.3. **VAWG** covers a wider range than Domestic Abuse of violence and abuse perpetrated against women because of their gender. VAWG can be perpetrated by partners, ex partners or family members, but also by other people.

Domestic abuse is a form of VAWG. The UK government's Ending VAWG Strategy 2021 also covers other forms of VAWG, including:

- Rape and other sexual violence
- Stalking
- So-called 'honour' based violence including forced marriage
- FGM
- The risks and harms associated with prostitution and sex work.
- 'Revenge porn' and 'upskirting'.

A significant number of men and boys also experience violent and abusive crimes that fall under the definition of VAWG. However, these experiences disproportionately affect women and girls, who are targeted because of their gender.

- 4.4. **Economic abuse:** When someone interferes (through control, exploitation or sabotage) with their partner's ability to acquire, use and/or maintain economic resources. Economic resources include: money, housing, transportation, and utilities such as heating or items such as food or clothing.
- 4.5. **Controlling behaviour:** A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

- 4.6. **Coercive behaviour:** An act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.
- 4.7. **Family members** are the person's or their partner's mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, first cousin, grandparent, or grandchild, whether directly related, step-family or in-laws. This definition applies whether the person is currently or formerly married, in a civil partnership, or cohabiting with their partner.
- 4.8. **Significant harm:** A child witnessing (including hearing or being aware of domestic abuse) is regarded as experiencing "significant harm" in law.

5. Relevant Documents, Policies and Procedures

- A1 Domestic violence disclosure scheme (Clare's Law)
- A2 Completing the DASH RIC
- A3 MARAC – Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
- A4 Asking about domestic abuse
- A5 Domestic abuse services and support
- A6 Quick guide - responding to domestic abuse
- A7 Power and control wheel
- A8 Equality wheel
- A9 LGBT power and control wheel
- A10 Posters care or control?

Incident Reporting (B07)

Responding to Bullying and Harassment of Clients (B15)

Safeguarding Adults (B37)

Safeguarding Children (B46)

Visitors of Clients (B20)

Working with Clients (B08)

KO21 Prevention and Reduction of Violence

This policy was developed in consultation with:

- SStS
- Women's services
- Housing first
- Outreach
- NSNO
- Mixed Hostels
- Regional Heads
- The St Mungo's diversity networks
- Quality and Continuous Improvement
- Involvement and Inclusion